LEADING STRATEGIC LEADER TEAMS

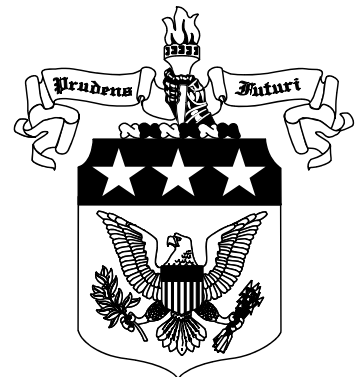## BY

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LEADING STRATEGIC LEADER TEAMS

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ABSTRACT

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Strategic leaders of the 21st Century face the daunting task of operating and making decisions in a world consisting of exponential population growth, competition over scarce resources, world-wide economic interdependence, technological innovation, and omni-present and changing dissemination of knowledge and information. Although only 1-2% of the Army's senior leaders will attain a command position of strategic leadership, they are assisted by others, not only by teams specifically designed and structured to develop long term plans and policy, but also by teams created for specific purposes. Strategic leader teams research, develop, and make strategic recommendations to our Army's senior leadership. This study will highlight the competencies required of strategic leader team members, review the necessity of strategic leader team diversity, as well as discuss effective strategic leader team processes that lead to recommendations.

LEADING STRATEGIC LEADER TEAMS

Strategic leaders of the 21st Century operate in a volatile, complex, uncertain and ambiguous environment and face the daunting task of making decisions and implementing strategy in a world consisting of exponential population growth, competition over scarce resources, world-wide economic interdependence, technological innovation, and omni-present and changing dissemination of knowledge and information. The complexity and ambiguity of the environment challenges individual strategic leader's abilities to make the best decisions without the assistance of others. As such, strategic leaders must develop teams which provide them capacity and diversity to make sound decisions.[1] Strategic leader and top management teams exist throughout government and industry in order to assist strategic leaders in coping with the turbulence and complexity of their internal and external environments.[2] These strategic and top teams are responsible for formulating and implementing responses and programs to often contradictory and vague information.[3] Although only 1-2% of the Army's senior leaders will attain a position formally known as a strategic leader, select teams and staff assist these strategic leaders in the exercise of strategic leadership. [4]

The United States Army has a long history of describing the skills and attributes required of all levels of leadership. Previous doctrinal publications such as Department of the Army Pamphlet (DA PAM) 600-80, *Executive Leadership,* and Field Manual (FM) 22-103, *Leadership and Command at Senior Levels,* formalized the idea that leadership at higher levels differs from leadership at lower levels.[5] Currently, the Army consolidates its strategic leadership doctrine into FM 6-22, *Army Leadership*, Chapter 12, which specifically addresses "Strategic Leadership". This chapter describes

strategic leaders as having a future focus, and spending much of their time looking toward long-term goals and successes, while concurrently contending with mid-term and immediate issues and crises.[6] A further review of Army and contemporary strategic leadership literature produces a list of six metacompetencies for strategic leaders: identity, mental agility, cross-cultural savvy, interpersonal maturity, world-class warrior, and professional astuteness.[7] Although limiting this list to six competencies permits focus, it oversimplifies the tremendous skills and abilities strategic leaders must use on a daily basis. These competencies must apply not only to those whom we consider the organizational strategic leaders, but these same competencies must be resonant with those in the organization charged with the development and recommendation of strategic plans, actions, and policy. Strategic leader teams (SLTs) are specifically designed and structured to not only develop long term plans and policy, but there are also teams created for short duration processes or purposes. SLTs must consist of individuals capable of thinking strategically; otherwise they cannot adequately support the strategic leader.[8] These teams often consist of field grade officers and above, and senior Army civilians that research, develop, and make strategic recommendations to our Army's senior leaders.   Therefore, many of the skills required of our strategic leaders must also exist within SLTs. Individuals who comprise strategic leader teams must take their individual biases, aptitudes, and backgrounds and integrate them into the team problem solving process.[9] Strategic leader teams serve this purpose for their organizations and their strategic leaders; they formulate, coordinate and apply those actions necessary to shape the climate and culture by vision, policy, communications, education, coaching, mentoring, and personal example.[10]

This study will describe strategic leader teams and their functions, highlight the six metacompetencies essential for strategic leader team members, review the necessity of demographic, informational and behavioral diversity within the strategic leader teams, as well as discuss team processes for effective strategic leader team decision-making. Team members must apply different skills, perspectives, and experiences to produce recommendations and strategy in ways that are not possible by the individual members working on their own.[11] SLT individual competencies, team member diversity and group processes permit the creation of a team environment where strategic issues can be framed, analyzed and solutions developed.

Strategic Leadership in Teams

The U.S. Army War College defines strategic leadership as,

> …the process used by a leader to affect the achievement of a desirable and clearly understood vision by influencing the organizational culture, allocating resources, directing through policy and directive, and building consensus within a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous global environment which is marked by opportunities and threats.[12]

The Army's previous doctrinal publication on senior leadership, Department of the Army Pamphlet (DA Pam) 600-80, *Executive Leadership*, defines the executive level or what is presently referred to as the strategic level, as the top one or two echelons in a large, multilayered organization.[13] Both definitions describe a level of organizational structure where strategic leader teams are formally and informally chartered to develop strategy and conduct strategic planning.[14] Examples of formal strategic leader teams (SLTs) might be a combatant or service component commander's planning/initiatives group, a major command's entire staff led by general and field grade officers, or a staff

directorate within a service component department.   Informal strategic leader

teams might be a council of colonels or general officer steering committee

formed to review or rewrite specific policies and publications. These SLTs serve

as a critical element in the strategic leadership process; they represent the

confluence of information and competencies within the organization.[15] They

bring multiple perspectives and different competencies, as well as different

experiences to the SLT. Effective teams combine and integrate their individual

skills to produce results greater than any single strategic leader could achieve

alone. However, in order for SLTs to produce strategic outcomes, as a group

they must possess the same metacompetencies we expect in our individual

strategic leaders. Teams with a narrower strategic focus may not necessarily

require the same breadth of competencies as those responsible for broader

issues, but, if the team's purpose is to develop long term plans,

recommendations, or policy, a breadth of competencies is necessary to ensure

the development of holistic solutions. An example of this might be an SLT

formed to solve a specific problem, as in the investigation of the alleged cover up

at My Lai, in which LTG William Peers was assisted by a team of senior officers,

legal experts and civilians to determine not only what happened in the village of

My Lai, Vietnam, but provide recommendations in accordance with Army

Regulation 15-6. This team appointed by the Secretary of the Army, Honorable

Stanley Resor and the Chief of Staff of the Army, General William Westmoreland,

consisted of LTG Peers, a senior civilian deputy, two nationally recognized

lawyer as special counsels, twelve Army Colonels of varying backgrounds,

twenty five additional field and company grade officers, and over fifty additional enlisted personnel.[16] This team's charter was to determine the adequacy of previous investigations and whether any suppression or withholding of information had taken place.[17] Early on in the inquiry LTG Peers recognized that he needed to review all the facts and background information, collect all pertinent records, locate and interrogate witnesses, and prepare a report that contained results with appropriate findings and recommendations.[18] Over the course of four months the inquiry team interviewed over 100 individuals, traveled to and from Vietnam, edited and completed the investigation and prepared recommendations.[19] The team produced a four volume report, which provided a detailed account of the My Lai incident, assigned responsibility to individuals and organizations for specific acts and omissions, but also provided over a dozen recommendations to the Army for review covering everything for personnel assignment/rotation policy, records management, law of warfare institutional training, selection and training of liaison officers, employment of First Sergeants, and the use of smoke grenades.[20] The results and recommendations of the Peers Inquiry would have long lasting impacts, not only on the Army as a profession but also on the institutional learning base within the Army. It took a heterogeneous team of strategic thinkers, not just investigators to produce a comprehensive inquiry with recommendations like the Peers Report. This team arrived at its conclusion not just through an investigative process but through the diverse individual competencies of its members which permitted them to

understand the culture, decisions and environment surrounding the Son My

incident.

Team Functions

   The magnitude and complexity of an undertaking like the Peers Inquiry,

demonstrates that it is not just the make up of a team that is important, but also the

processes and functions performed within that allow the team to reach conclusions and

recommendations in an uncertain and complex environment. Just as important as the

individual competencies and diversity of SLT members is the process which allows the

team to actually work together and produce strategic results. Strategic leader teams

operate in an environment filled with uncertainty and imperfect information, where the

consequences of team failure result in significant and sometimes disastrous outcomes.

Early work on groupthink attributed several foreign policy fiascoes, such as the Bay of

Pigs Invasion, to the pressures for conformity that arise within senior cohesive groups.[21]

By virtue of the diversity of the team, some members have more knowledge than others

on any given issue or task that comes to the team. Additionally, team members may

have more or less vested interest in the outcome of the team's process. Unless

information and interests within the team are managed appropriately, the team's overall

effectiveness is jeopardized. Researchers in this area use the term "process loss" to

describe the gap attributable to ineffective communication or coordination between a

team's potential and actual performance.[22]   Process losses occur when: teams arrive at

a decision prematurely, fail to surface relevant information that members possess, and

let personal motivations/interests overcome the good of the organization.[23] Given that

the members of a strategic leader team possess the necessary individual competencies

to operate within the complex and ambiguous environment, how does a strategic leader team minimize the opportunity for process loss while at the same time maximizing the opportunity for leader team effectiveness? Effectiveness of top or strategic teams can be defined as follows: 1) the degree to which the team's recommendations/decisions enhance organizational performance[24] 2) member commitment to implementing team decisions and willingness to work together in the future[25] 3) the extent to which the team process meets members' growth and satisfaction needs.[26] Demographic analysis of top management teams assumes a consistency of conditions and team performance that is unlikely to exist in top management teams and therefore minimizes the role of team process. [27] Normative decision theory in contrast, focuses specifically on how leaders make their decisions, and suggests that leaders ought to interact differently with subordinates based on situational attributes and that leaders should invite more or less subordinate participation in decision-making based on quality of the decision, level of time pressure and the extent to which subordinate commitment is essential.[28] Normative theory looks at whether a leader should use a team to make a decision; it does not look at how to manage a team process to produce desired outcomes. Yet, the idea that leader interactions with a team can produce a higher quality product and improve subordinate commitment demonstrates that the quantity and quality of team member contribution plays a role in how the team process functions.[29] Strategic leader teams must comprehend and interpret a significant amount of often conflicting information from a variety of sources.[30] They face a continuous flow of varying and overlapping tasks; some may be familiar and routine, while others require significant effort simply to clearly define or understand the problem.

The failure to properly use available information as well as the failure to consider the full range of ideas of group members can lead to process losses.[31] One of the principal reasons for utilizing an SLT is to pool knowledge and expertise in order to create ideas in an uncertain and ambiguous environment that cannot be done by one individual alone. Teamwork cannot be taken for granted; that does not mean that team members will deliberately withhold information, however, team members may take for granted that other members share the same knowledge or assumptions about a topic. Studies have also shown that unique information (know only by one member) tends not to be shared in group discussions.[32] SLT members may unknowingly fail to share private information due to their active involvement in the issue at hand or because they unknowingly assume that others know the same information. If specific information relevant to the task at hand fails to surface, the quality of the outcome may be reduced. In the ambiguous and uncertain environment of SLTs this may cause plausible options, consequences and risk to be overlooked.[33] An unintended outcome of a failure to share information is less than full commitment to the solution or mistrust in other team members, which ultimately will lead to unproductive group outcomes. The necessity of SLT members sharing all available knowledge is significantly more difficult in a group where power within the group is centralized. Research has found that found that top management teams with a high degree of power centralization engaged in less candid and open exchange of ideas than teams with more balanced power.[34]

When a member of a team has the ability to influence others' behavior and to get them to do what they otherwise might not do, the likelihood that all private information is shared within the team is reduced. In some teams power is shared nearly equally, in

others a leader will take on a more prominent role. Power centralization, which is when a team member or leader has a great deal more power than other team members will limit information sharing.[35] Team members with less power may defer to others, their contributions may be marginalized or they may self censor in order to preserve their current standing.[36]   Just as power centralization within an SLT has the potential to degrade team effectiveness, the degree to which team members feel safe for interpersonal risk-taking has the potential to increase effectiveness.

Team psychological safety is defined as the shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking.[37] When teams have a high degree of psychological safety, team members feel that they can participate freely in an environment of mutual respect where the group will not rebuke, marginalize, or penalize them for sharing their thoughts or opinions.[38] This type of behavior can be seen in academic environments where a policy of non-attribution is applied. Individuals are more likely to be candid and open in an environment where there comments and perspective cannot be attributed to them. Although it may seem intuitive that in teams where power is centralized, that team members may feel less psychological safety, that may not necessarily be the case.[39] Leaders can take actions which create psychological safety such as admitting to mistakes, promoting alternative ideas, and communicating a sincere desire for open and frank discussion. Even when leaders take actions to promote psychological safety, it takes time for SLTs to develop a high degree of psychological safety that can partially mitigate differences in information which team members may have. Just as varying degrees of information can decrease team effectiveness, so can different values or interests within the SLT.

When members of an SLT have divergent interests the team may experience process losses. Members of an SLT come to team not just as those empowered to solve strategic issues on behalf of an organization, but also as leaders within their own distinct branches or departments. As members of disparate organizations, SLT members bring to the table the goals and identities of their own organizations and they must potentially balance the competing interests of the larger organization over their subgroup. Although not automatic, the potential for SLT members to represent the values of their individual organizations over that of the larger whole does exist. When this happens, the generation of options to solve the specified task or issues at hand greatly decreases, thorough analysis is limited and team relationships erode.[40] In these sorts of situations, team members are likely to see themselves as "winners" or "losers". A simple example of this was the force structure decisions of the U.S. military in the early 2000s, where perceptions were that there were "winners" and "losers" in overall end strengths as a result of Global War on Terror requirements.[41]   Focusing on individual interests or values decreases the SLT effectiveness; power centralization in a value-claiming environment exacerbates the problem.[42]

In an SLT with a powerful leader, the leader may believe that he can propose a solution quickly. In doing so, creative problem solving is suppressed and less powerful members may focus primarily on protecting their own interests and cooperate less with others as a result of feeling that the SLT is not about discovering mutually benefiting alternatives but more of a competition. Similar to mitigating differences in information between SLT members, psychological safety may also reduce the negative effects of value-claiming activity.

When members of an SLT feel psychologically safe, they are willing to explore opportunities for mutual gains and explore proposals which may differ from their own interests and objectives.[43] They participate in frank dialogue without the concern of being punished or embarrassed. This sort of dialogue enables alternate perspectives to be explored and opportunities for mutual gains to be created. Thus, psychological safety within an SLT increases the potential for SLT members to concentrate on the task or issues at hand without being consumed by there own interests and values.

Disparities in both information and interests/values may be obstacles to effectiveness for SLTs. These two variables may be impacted positively or negatively by the degree of power centralization and psychological safety within an SLT. Team leaders have the ability to manage team processes to positively influence power centralization and psychological safety, while at the same time mitigating the negative effects of information disparity and interest/value divergence.

Team Competencies

While individual metacompetencies were written to apply to individual strategic leaders, strategic leader teams should possess the metacompetencies of identity, mental agility, cross-cultural savvy, interpersonal maturity and world class warrior. Ashby's law of requisite variety makes the point that the complexity of the team makeup should match either the problem or the external environment from which the problem emerges in order to achieve consistent, high-quality outcomes.[44] That necessitates a look at the internal composition of the team to ensure that team members have the competency and diversity to match the complex strategic environment. Identity not only describes the individual self awareness of SLT members, but also how the group

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assesses their abilities, strengths, and weaknesses. Measures to improve awareness of team member strengths and weaknesses as well as methods to assess organizational mores and norms play a critical role in the SLT's understanding of identity. Identity also includes an awareness and understanding of organizational cultures and sub-cultures. As SLTs develop long range plans and policies they must understand current organizational cultures, as well as their own team culture, so that they can develop implementing guidance and instructions that will move the organization forward to its future or desired culture.

Mental agility may be the most essential competency for members of an SLT, but also for the collective operation of the SLT. Mentally agile leaders and SLTs scan and identify relevant information and then envision futures within increasingly longer time horizons.[45] SLT members must challenge assumptions, facilitate constructive dissent, and then analyze second- and third-order consequences of their respective decisions.[46] They must also ensure that they have access to and use valid information on both the external and internal environments of the organization.[47] Mentally agile SLTs scan their environment, identify issues or challenges, predict the impact of issues and challenges on the current and future operating environment, recommend or decide the appropriate way ahead, and then ensure systemic mechanisms are adapted and implemented.

With the increased necessity and frequency of coalition warfare as well as cooperation with joint, interagency, and inter-governmental entities, cross-cultural savvy is an absolute necessity. Cross-cultural savvy with coalition partners or senior leaders minimizes unpleasant surprises, provides advance insights, and enables SLTs to interact with nationalities with whom previously no relationship existed.[48] This

competency permits SLTs to understand perspectives outside of their normal

boundaries; yet, awareness of cultural diversity within the team itself is of equal

importance so that team members value each others differences in perspective and

thought. These boundaries are not limited solely to dealing with other nations, but must

include our own sister services, government agencies and Congress.

At the strategic level and within the SLT, interpersonal maturity goes beyond face

to face leadership.[49] SLTs scan their environment; this requires SLTs to interact cross-

culturally, dealing with representatives and teams of other countries and agencies.

SLTs must not only possess the interpersonal maturity necessary to foster and continue

strategic relationships, but they must also be able to employ negotiation and build

consensus.[50] Consensus building with peers, outside agencies, foreign governments,

and sister services requires SLTs to fully understand alternate perspectives, employ

effective reasoning, and reach agreeable solutions. SLT members must also utilize

interpersonal maturity in their interactions within the team, just as they did externally.

Interpersonal maturity also includes the ability of SLTs to analyze, challenge, and

change an organization's culture to align it with an ever changing external

environment.[51] SLTs must scan their environment, engage groups with alternate

perspectives, and identify areas in which their organization's culture is misaligned with

the external environment. Lastly, interpersonal maturity includes taking responsibility

for the development of future strategic leaders. In this capacity, SLTs not only develop

each other through their interactions, but they must also ensure that they develop and

implement systemic methods to not only perpetuate the life of their SLT, but more

importantly ensure that developmental processes are incorporated into institutional and organizational bases.

The competency of professional astuteness plays a prominent role in SLT interaction. SLT members must recognize that they are not just members of a profession, but are now leaders within their profession.[52] Astute SLT members understand that they and other members of the team contribute to the group differently; they bring their own knowledge, skills, and values to the team. This understanding allows members of the SLT to value the diversity of team and recognize its importance in productive problem solving. When the team confronts a task, they must solve it as custodians of their profession; they must set aside their egos and personal biases for the good of the organization.

The sixth strategic leader team individual metacompetency is world-class warrior. Strategic leader teams must be able to understand the impact of their recommendations and decisions at the tactical, operational and strategic levels.[53] By understanding the full spectrum of operations, the elements of national power, and the impact of technology on operations, SLT members are able to bring their diverse perspectives and heuristics to the team in order to make sound recommendations and decisions in the development of strategic plans and policy in the increasingly volatile and ambiguous strategic environment.

Note of caution however, as team selection and development techniques are refined for both leaders and teams, we must be careful to not be overly prescriptive. That was the genesis of the Army's current six metacompetencies; multiple competency lists were defined into just six refined overall competencies. Dr Leonard Wong cautions,

When attempting to influence the large and dispersed system of professional military training and education institutions, there is a powerful tendency to seek solutions that are definitive, prescriptive, and complete. It reveals a penchant for an unambiguous list that is both definable and measurable. It suggests that the paradigm of technical rationality—with its emphasis on logical reasoning, science, and empirical method—is in operation. It seeks prediction standards, and control of the training and educational process.[54]

Although collective and individual competencies play a role in the teams overall ability to function and recommend actions in the strategic environment, diversity of the team may be more essential to problem solving in the uncertain and ambiguous strategic decision-making world.

Team Diversity

SLTs operate in the face of complexity, uncertainty and inadequate or obsolete information.[55] Within this section, the role of will be reviewed and how diversity affects SLT processes. Diversity within SLTs may be examined at three levels, demographic, informational and behavioral.[56] All of these measures of diversity have a different impact on the strategic ability of an SLT; all three will be reviewed in terms of their productive or unproductive effect on the SLT. Demographic diversity refers to obvious differences such as race, gender, age and ethnicity. Informational diversity stems from different personal and professional experiences, training and educational background. Behavioral diversity refers to the different personality styles within the team.[57] Where there are teams with high diversity, teams engage in debate based on their different perceptions of the strategic environment, the range of possible strategic options, the most appropriate strategic decisions, and the processes for strategy implementation.[58] Diverse teams, fuelled by their differing perspectives of the world, are likely to engage in discussion and conflict rather than accepting existing strategies or routine ways of

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operating.[59] Conversely, teams with low diversity share more common perceptions of

their strategic environment, and thus generate fewer strategic options and are prone to

regenerating existing strategies.[60]

SLTs and top management teams may consist of individuals with diverse

backgrounds and competencies from within the organization as a whole. Diversity

among senior leader teams may sometimes follow the "portfolio analogy" where at least

one member of the SLT possesses the knowledge and skills to handle any situation

which may arise.[61] Although this may provide a team with a broad base of knowledge,

this analogy often breaks down when applied to team-based problem solving because

there is no give and take in developing a solutions.[62] A more thorough analysis must be

conducted to ensure that diversity within SLTs permits alternate perspectives to be

examined and better solutions devised. Challenging assumptions is a critical element

for team processes. When members of an SLT challenge each other's assumptions,

they are able to reach better-justified decisions and more broadly-framed strategies.

Diverse perspectives and heuristics develop capacity within SLTs and increase the

team's ability to act collectively in the complex and ambiguous strategic environment.

Demographic Diversity

Demographic diversity refers to those characteristics of team members such as

gender, age and race. These measures of diversity, although readily apparent, are

really intended to be indicators of deeper informational and value differences. While

these measures of diversity may impact team member values and perspectives, over

time their contribution to the strategy making process is minimized.[63] The longer the

SLT is together and the more familiarity the team members have, the less these

demographic measures make a difference. Demographic diversity is therefore insufficient to rely on solely as a form of diversity on within the SLT. It is sufficient to say that it will make a difference in the early stages of the team; however, in the long run demographic differences will not significantly increase the strategic capacity of the team.

Informational Diversity

On the other hand, informational diversity within the SLT will more robustly impact the strategic capacity of the SLT. A wide range of professional backgrounds, functions, education, and training offers the diversity desirable to improving an SLT's ability to develop and implement strategy.[64] Dominance of any specific background, education or training within the SLT however, will limit the ability of the team to develop strategic recommendations in an uncertain environment, yet it does provide speed within processes. The match between the SLT's knowledge base and core individual interests will vary over time. First, depending on the issue confronting the SLT, all members of the team generally possess different levels of knowledge on the subject. This knowledge consists of facts, data, and ideas that are relative to the current issue or particular decision.[65] In a military setting this might be a senior officer steering committee on a topic which although all members might be familiar with, they lack the specific expertise within the field i.e. a committee of senior officers to review and recommend a menu of incentives for junior officer retention. Secondly, just as individual knowledge on a task or issue varies, so do the interests that an SLT member brings to the table. Task specific interests are the goals and objectives that individual team members desire to achieve, sometimes at the expense of other team members or their

constituencies.[66] An example of this might be a major commands process for the

redistribution and reprioritization of funding due to a budget decrement---each member

of the team, will seek to protect the funding line of his/her larger constituency that they

came from. Thus a strategic leader team may have different degrees of individual

information and interest on any specific issue or task. The degree to which team

members have distinct, unshared information or have divergent interests in a given

situation can magnify the potential for process loss within the SLT.

As team members are replaced, the team must audit its composition to ensure

that it maintains a balance in informational diversity. In a team with high informational

diversity, where team members challenge each others assumptions, the potential exists

for the development of more comprehensive, broadly-framed strategies and better-

justified decisions.[67] This sort of productive conflict broadens the strategic abilities of

the team; however, care must be taken to ensure that individuals do not engage in self

protective behavior or become mired down in challenging every assumption and

prospective solution. SLTs which are high in informational diversity have the potential

to significantly improve strategy capacity as long the team engages in productive

conflict resolution vice destructive social conflict activities.[68]

Personality Diversity

One of the challenges with SLT formation is that diversity tends to use primarily

demographic and informational measures. These measures are readily available and

do offer varying perspectives when it comes to the strategy making process, yet they

also may lapse the team into social conflict.[69] While these may be worthwhile indicators

of potential strategic capacity, they provide only partial information and do not provide

the deeper evaluation and more enduring level of behavior diversity.[70] Diversity in

personality is important to the SLT in two ways: 1) personality is a better indicator as it

is less likely to change over time, 2) the personality composition of the team will strongly

affect the way it works together over time and its ability to engage in productive vice

non-productive task conflict.[71] A common assessment tool such as the Myers Briggs

Type Indicator (MBTI) can demonstrate general personality diversity in four main style

preferences: energizing, attention, deciding, and organizational behaviors.[72] Diversity

in these four personality preferences is important throughout the strategy making

process. Alternatively, a more detailed personality assessment tool is the instrument

developed by Paul Costa and Robert McRae which measures neurotics, extroversion,

openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (NEO-PI-R).[73]

Awareness of team preferences can play an important role in the strengths of a team,

but also reveal aspects of their strategy making process to which they must pay more

attention. Teams that contain diverse behavioral styles on the MBTI are found to have

enhanced problem-solving capacity.[74] Diverse perspective and values may bring

challenges to group processes, however, diversity is more likely to have positive effects

such as improved environmental scanning of the team or increasing the potential

actions that the group considers when making strategic decisions.[75] The more areas of

divergence in the team members MBTI, the more likely they see and interpret the world

differently, and the more likely conflict will occur within the team. Conflict allows a more

thorough discussion on perspectives and reasoning, yet it can also lead to non-

productive disagreement as well as task conflict. It is important that behavioral diversity

be considered along with both demographic and informational diversity in selecting and

training the SLT. Behavioral diversity assists the SLT in recognizing its potential strengths and weakness in trying to define and solve strategic issues.

All measures of diversity have the potential to significantly improve the SLT's problem solving process, yet without the interpersonal maturity and cross-cultural awareness attributes of members, diversity can create non-productive social or task conflict. Diversity alone will not solely enable successful strategic process within an SLT, mechanisms within the team and how it functions are essential to ensure that diverse perspectives and heuristics are heard, considered and deliberated upon.

Process Choices

Given the diversity of the SLT, the strategic leader has choices on how to operate his/her team. Leaders of strategic leader teams must recognize and understand how they can manage the processes utilized by their team. The process must not only reduce or eliminate information and interest differences, but it must also harvest the synergy which can arise from teams formed of individuals with different backgrounds, information and interests. Three process choices which leaders have are: 1) how to reach closure on a decision (outcome control) 2) how to facilitate group discussion (process control) 3) how to structure debate (process design).[76] Outcome control and process control provide ways to mitigate differences in interests and information respectively, while process design reduces problems caused by the interaction of information and interest differences.[77]

Leaders within SLTs face the decision about how much control to exercise over the outcome of the SLT's decision-making process. Outcome control involves a leader asking his team to generate and discuss alternatives and then making the final decision

alone. Low outcome control means that the team reaches a consensus decision in which the leader acts as a mediator, while high outcome control suggests that the leader is an arbitrator who listens to competing arguments and positions and then selecting the course of action which he believes is best for the organization.[78] When a team shares similar interests and values, low outcome control will encourage creative problem solving and commitment to the solution.[79] If within the SLT values and interests diverge then the SLT leader must mitigate the harmful effects of competing values through increased control. By telling the team that he will listen to all aspects of proposed solutions and make a decision, the SLT leader decreases the likelihood that a struggle over consensus will occur and a suboptimal solution for the organization will be offered. SLT leaders who exercise outcome control will bring the issue to an end before it comes to a competitive head.

Equally important as reaching the decision is the process used to encourage the sharing of information. Process control is used by the SLT leader to encourage information sharing, highlight remarks made by members, and to incite additional inquiry into the views expressed within the team. High process control within the SLT entails reiterating or paraphrasing points which received little attention, as well as questioning and testing ideas for understanding.[80] Low process control involves promulgating discussion in which members participate as they wish, without total participation or rephrasing/paraphrasing of ideas.   Within the SLT the one mode or the other must be based on the degree to which members have common information and the degree to which they share information which is not known to most of the group. A high degree of control may be required when members have experiential information which they may

either take for granted or intentionally withhold. In a group with common information a lower degree of control is necessary, as any attempt to get them to share more extensively the information which they share in common may be seen as superfluous. When SLT members feel that by sharing their private information they have the opportunity to influence the outcome, they build commitment to the team and its products. When SLTs openly share information and encourage participation by all members they reduce the potential negative outcome of differences in member information and backgrounds.

SLTs also face the choice about how to design their group process to ensure thorough and comprehensive discussion of ideas and information. The idea of process design involves breaking a team into subgroups to explore alternatives before reconvening as a group, or assigning an individual to observe and critique alternatives which are discussed.[81] These process designs can be used to counteract the risk of teams failing to generate or fully explore recommendations and courses of actions. In a low process design group, the group determines how it will share information and explore alternatives. In a high process design group, a method is prescribed to ensure that alternatives are developed and evaluated. Studies have found that groups with structure process methods promoted higher levels of team member satisfaction as well as greater commitment to the final solution.[82]   The process design of the SLT may reduce the differences that SLT members share in both information and values, thus increasing the effectiveness of the SLT.

<u>Conclusion</u>

Strategic leader teams of the 21st Century operate in a volatile, complex, uncertain and ambiguous environment and face the challenge of making recommendations and developing strategy in a world consisting of exponential population growth, competition over scarce resources, world-wide economic interdependence, technological innovation, and omni-present and changing dissemination of knowledge and information. Strategic leaders in this environment must develop teams which provide them capacity and diversity to make sound decisions.[83] This paper has reviewed the role of strategic leader teams and how strategic leaders can maximize team effectiveness. A review of strategic leader metacompetencies shows how these skills not only apply to the individual strategic leader, but also to strategic leader teams. Demographic, informational, and behavioral measures of diversity must be considered in creating the SLT. The productive conflict which occurs as a result of diverse team membership is essential to developing solutions and strategy in the uncertain and complex world. As strategic leader teams execute their duties, they must ensure that within their process that imperfections in information awareness and personal interests are mitigated through leader intervention and process choices.

The aforementioned skills, diversities and processes, although to some may seem intuitive, must be institutionalized to ensure that strategic leader teams have a full set of tools with which to operate in the ambiguous and complex strategic environment. Additional study on forming an SLT with the right mix of team member competencies, diversity, and processes to operate at the strategic level may produce informative results. Training and development of the SLT itself during both its formative and later stages may also be merited. In the end, the investment made in selecting members of

strategic leader teams with the proper competencies and diversities, in conjunction with

team processes and controls, will increase the team's likelihood of success in the

volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous strategic environment.

Endnotes

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